Kennedy, John F. 4-1

AS:mln

MEMORANDUM

April 30, 1964

TO: Mr. J. Lee Rankin

FROM: Arlen Specter

SUBJECT: Autopsy Photographs and X-Rays of President John F. Kennedy

In my opinion it is indispensable that we obtain the photographs and x-rays of President Kennedy's autopsy for the following reasons:

1. The Commission should determine with certainty whether the shots came from the rear. Someone from the Commission should review the films to corroborate the autopsy surgeons' testimony that the holes on the President's back and head had the characteristics of points of entry. None of the doctors at Parkland Hospital in Dallas observed the hole in the President's back or the small hole in the lower portion of his head. With all of the outstanding controversy about the direction of the shots, there must be independent viewings of the films to verify testimony which has come only from Government doctors.

2. The Commission should determine with certainty whether the shots came from above. It is essential for the Commission to know precisely the location of the bullet wound on the President's back so that the angle may be calculated. The artist's drawing prepared at Bethesda (Commission Exhibit #385) shows a slight angle of declination. It is hard, if not impossible, to explain such a slight angle of decline unless the President was farther down Elm Street than we have heretofore believed. Before coming to any conclusion on this, the angles will have to be calculated at the scene; and for this, the exact point of entry should be known.

3. The Commission should determine with certainty that there are no major variations between the films and the artist's drawings. Commission Exhibits Nos. 385, 386 and 388 were made from the recollections of the autopsy surgeons as told to the artist. Some day someone may compare the films with the artist's drawings and find a significant error which might substantially affect the essential testimony and the Commission's conclusions. In any event, the Commission should not rely on hazy recollections, especially in view of the statement in the autopsy report (Commission Exhibit #387) that:

> "The complexity of these fractures and the fragments thus produced tax satisfactory verbal description and are better appreciated in photographs and roentgenograms which are prepared."

When Inspector Kelly talked to Attorney General Kennedy, he most probably did not fully understand all the reasons for viewing the films. According to Inspector Kelly, the Attorney General did not categorically decline to make them available, but only wanted to be satisfied that they were really necessary. I suggest that the Commission transmit to the Attorney General its reasons for wanting the films and the assurance that they will be viewed only by the absolute minimum number of people from the Commission for the sole purpose of corroborating (or correcting) the artist's drawings, with the films not to become a part of the Commission's records.